

# 2001-2002

# Louisiana State

# Education Progress Report



Louisiana Department of Education  
Cecil J. Picard, State Superintendent  
March 2003

For further information, contact

Laura Boudreaux Pitre

Division of Planning, Analysis, and Information Resources

Telephone: (225) 342-0917, e-mail: [lboudreaux@doe.state.la.us](mailto:lboudreaux@doe.state.la.us)

Toll free helpline: 1-877-453-2721

Website: [www.louisianaschools.net](http://www.louisianaschools.net)

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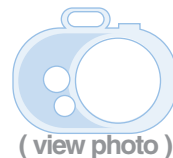
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Appreciation is extended to students and staff of schools at which the pictures for this publication were taken. The cooperation of photographers whose work is featured in this publication and of the newspapers that provided reprints is also commended.

# A Word From Your State Superintendent



STATE OF LOUISIANA  
**DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION**  
POST OFFICE BOX 94064, BATON ROUGE, LOUISIANA 70804-9064  
Toll Free #: 1-877-453-2721  
<http://www.doe.state.la.us>

On behalf of the State Board of Elementary and Secondary Education, the Louisiana Department of Education is proud to present the *2001–2002 Louisiana State Education Progress Report*. This annual document provides insightful analyses and an update on the condition, progress, and effectiveness of our public schools. With the level of detail and diagnostic analyses provided, the information in this document may be used as a valuable resource in the planning and formulation of additional initiatives for improving our public education system.

When I became State Superintendent of Education in 1996, I was given a mandate by the State Board of Elementary and Secondary Education and the Louisiana Legislature to develop and implement the education reforms necessary to significantly improve student academic achievement. After considerable research and planning, the *Louisiana Student and School Accountability System* was initiated in 1999.

Louisiana's system is considered one of the most rigorous and comprehensive accountability programs in the nation. Under this system, we expect and require commitment, focus, and excellence from our students, schools, and teachers. Our reforms are recognized nationally for innovation and results, and many states are using our system as a model for their own education reform efforts. *Education Week* ranked Louisiana 5<sup>th</sup> out of the 50 states in its annual Quality Counts Survey (2003) for the State's significant efforts in the standards and accountability initiative. This is the second year that we have ranked within the top five states in this category. *The Princeton Review* ranked our testing program 7<sup>th</sup> in the nation (June 2002).

Our Accountability System is ambitious, and many thought it was an audacious move to raise standards and expectations in a state with the second highest poverty rate in the country, but we knew that Louisiana students deserved nothing less. Louisiana has made gains in every indicator of student achievement, which is proof positive that the changes being made are on target for improving our educational system.

We are extremely proud of our accomplishments. In fall 2001, an overwhelmingly majority of our schools (69%) either met or exceeded their Accountability Growth Targets. In fact, the state as a whole received an *Exemplary Academic Growth* label. We realize that the easy gains have already been achieved. This fact is evidenced with the fall 2002 Interim Year Accountability Results, indicating that 60% of our schools had not made at least 50% progress toward their 2003 Growth Targets. To continue the progress we have seen in the beginning years of accountability, there are still many challenges ahead to overcome.

With the continued support from the Governor, the State Board of Elementary and Secondary Education, and the Louisiana Legislature, the Department of Education will continue its commitment to improving student learning. We will continue to press ahead on all fronts, and will not rest until every child in Louisiana is able to perform at his or her maximum potential. The key to reaching our goal is to stay the course and remain focused that *no child [is] left behind*.

Cecil J. Picard  
State Superintendent of Education

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